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FRENCH PHONETIC TRAINING IN THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

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The object of the phonetic training which the student receives is twofold: first, the acquisition of a good pronunciation; secondly, and by no means the least important, the learning of the written values of the various sounds with a view to establishing finally such an exact relation between the spoken and the written word that the sound will very nearly indicate the correct spelling. This second result of the phonetic training has been found to be a very definite aid in vocabulary building. For, by constantly developing the memory of the ear through continual oral drill, a degree of efficiency is attained whereby not only words but whole sentences are very easily retained. The result is a combination which produces great speed in the acquisition of vocabulary coupled with unusual accuracy in spelling.

We begin by a careful consideration of the general characteristics of French pronunciation, namely, the lack of accent or stress in the pronunciation of the words, the purity of the vowel tones as contrasted with the diphthongized or rolled English vowels, the explosion of the consonants, the fact that the syllable always begins with a consonant, and the generally more energetic production of the sound. This is followed by an explanation of the vowel triangle, accompanied by a description of the mouth position for each vowel. As each sound is described, the phonetic sign of the Association Phonétique Internationale is given, so that a definite symbol is learned for each separate sound. It has been found very helpful as an aid to precision and speed in pronunciation work to have a sign for each sound. In this connection twelve oral and four nasal vowels are explained.

After thus establishing in the pupil's mind a definite idea of each separate and distinct sound, and carefully drilling the pupils

in their production, it is possible to attack the problem of the written values of the sounds. The accompanying chart (I and II) is put into the hands of the students. As can be observed, there have been arranged in columns under each sound sign the various combinations of letters which produce this sound. Here is the method of handling the chart. It is stated as an invariable fact that *ou* gives the sound **u**. Words like *fou, bout, boue, sous, jour* are given with explanation of the consonantal rules. Next *eau* is given as producing **o**. *Beau, peau, l'eau*, are given and then the two vowels presented are combined in words like *beaucoup, nouveau, couteau, rouleau*. *Au* is next explained and examples given like *haut, saut, saute*, then *faubourg, autour, vautour*. *On* is now explained as the nasal of **o**.

It is not customary in America to explain *on* as derived from **o**, but rather from **ɔ**. M. Camerlyneth, however, teaches it at the Sorbonne, and Abbé Rousselot of the Institute Catholique says that the sound for **ō** is midway in position between **ō** and **ɔ̄**. The **o** has a decided pedagogic advantage over **ɔ̄** by enhancing the differentiation between *on* and *an*, two sounds that are very hard for the American ear to distinguish. If the student is taught **ō**, the natural aversion of the American to rounding his lips will relax the position sufficiently to be in accord with the views of Abbé Rousselot.

The explanation of *on* and *om* as producing **o** is followed by examples such as *bouton, mouton, nous sautons, contour, saumon, bourgeois, tombeau, monceau*. We continue this process of explaining the value in sound of a letter or combination of letters and of then giving words containing it and the combinations previously explained. When **e** is reached, a practical review is given of all the letters studied by presenting the series *goûté, beauté, sauté, bonté, ôté, porté, pâté, marché, parlé, rêvé, neigé, laissé, échappé, répété*, etc.

This, then, is the method of handling the chart. Each word is carefully selected with a view to building continually new words out of the vowel combinations already studied. About ten days are devoted to this work, with the result that the student can derive the pronunciation of a word from the spelling. This is the first stage in his phonetic training.

I. THE FRENCH VOWEL-SOUNDS

ALPHABET OF THE ASSOCIATION PHONÉTIQUE INTERNATIONALE

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1 u = ooze ou (rouge) où (goût)	2 o = ode ô (côte) au (pauvre) eau (beau) os (gros) (rose) otion (notion) -os (gros) -ot (flot) -o } Final } (Congo)	5 ā = ah! â (âme) as (pas) ation (nation) gazon blason a + ille (in nouns) (paille) roi = wa (roi)	7 a = arrow a + r (partir) any a not in 5 as (ami) banane e + mm (femme) oi = wa (voir)	8 ε = bed è (père) ê (rêve) ei (neige) e (cher, fer) ai (not final in verbs) ay (crayon) -âie (craie) -ais (palais) -ait (il parlait) -et final (objet) est (verb) { e + 2 cons. (belle) exceptions: see 6 and 7
3 ō on (bon) om (nom) } Final or followed by cons.	6 ā an (tant) am (lampe) en (dent) em (temps) } Final or followed by cons.		9 ε in (vin) im (grimper) eim (Reims) ain (pain) ym (syntaxe) aim (faim) ien (bien) } Final or followed by cons.	
10 e = mate é (été) -ez (vous avez) -er (aimer) -ai (final in verbs) ier (papier) et (conj.) ed (pied) des amis les amis mes amis	11 i = meet i (lire) -ie (folie) f (qu'il punit) y (tyran)	12 y = { i as to tongue { u as to lips u (dur) û (sûr) eu in j'ai eu, j'eus, il eut, ils eurent et in nous étimes, vous étites	14 œ { ε as to tongue { o as to lips eur (heure) œur (coeur) eu + il, ill: (feuille) ue + il, ill: (cueillir) (oeil)	16 œ = oe, relaxed (see 14) e, unaccented (venir, de lui, le) e, not followed by 2 consonants (see 8) ai in faisant, je faisais
	13 ø { e as to tongue { o as to lips -eu (feu) eut (peut) -eux (vieux) eus (meus) -euse (meuse)	15 œ un (brun) um (parfum) } Final or followed by cons.		

For a period of four weeks six minutes of each recitation are devoted to a review of this work and drill in the phonetic signs, together with pronunciation practice, through reading. First the phonetic signs must be placed under the vowels in the dictations studied. Then gradually the consonant mouth positions are explained, and the same process is employed as with the vowel

II. THE FRENCH CONSONANT-SOUNDS

ALPHABET OF THE ASSOCIATION PHONÉTIQUE INTERNATIONALE

s = hiss	x = ks (excepter)
s initial (soeur)	x = gs (exemple)
ce (cela)	
ci (ceci)	
ç (français)	
ss (casser)	p = mignonette
x in (soixante)	gn (vigne)
ti (nation, Boétie)	gn (régner)
s (fils) exception	
z = seize	k = come
s between two vowels (maison)	ca (camp)
s linked	co (corps)
$\int$ = shake	cu (cube)
ch (charmant)	qu (quand)
ʒ = pleasure	
ge (Georges)	g = gone
gi (gilet)	ga (gant)
j (jamais)	go (gorge)
j	gu (guerre)
y = (yeux payer)	c in (second).
i = bien, papier	
ille = p paille fille	
il = travail	

sounds. Under the sound *k*, for instance, *ca*, *co*, *cu*, and *qu* are given; under *s*, *ss*, *ce*, *ci*, and initial *s*, *tion*, *tie*, *x*, *c*. Now one or two lines of the dictation lesson are marked with the phonetic signs. Each day the pronunciation of these lines is carefully studied. Finally, to complete the students' impression of the exact value of the phonetic sound and the accompanying sign, they are required to prepare lists of words which contain a certain

selected sound, as, for example, *e*. Each day a new sound is thus treated until all the sounds have been thoroughly reviewed. This work, coupled with an average of three dictations a week and constant daily practice in reading, brings the pupil at the end of two months to a point where a very definite relation has been established between sound and spelling.

From this point it is but a step to teach the pupil to spell from sound. All the new words are first pronounced. Then their meanings are demonstrated according to the principles of the direct method, and finally they are spelled by the pupils. By constantly appealing to the ear we have developed the memory of the ear to such an extent that the sound is easily retained. Then the phonetic training has rendered the student capable of translating this sound into a written word. The result is an astonishing decrease in mistakes in spelling. This is a very valuable attainment, for it gives speed and accuracy in the acquisition of vocabulary. From this time on an effort is made to purify the pronunciation of the vowels, especially that of *e*, and to make the student accentuate the consonants.

The uvular *r* is taken up at the very beginning. This sound is approached from the *kr* and *tr* positions, especially the former. After four months a serious study of the sound *ə* or mute *e* is begun. Some of its characteristics were observed while studying verbs like *lever* and *appeler*. Its rôle in slow and rapid speech is studied, which leads to drill on the rhythm of the sentence and the verb, and a serious effort is made to eradicate the persistent American habit of letting the voice drop at the end, as this defect spoils the French flavor of even the most accurate pronunciation.

Finally, the various exceptions are treated, such as *fil*s, *second*, *femme*, *faisons*, *mille*, etc., *le huit*, *le onze*, *eu*, *dites-le*, *mauvais*, *Paul*, *ennui*, *six*, *six francs*, etc. Furthermore, it has been observed that after such a careful and serious phonetic training the student will handle almost unconsciously and with almost no explanation such grammar principles as *cet été*, *un bel homme*, *son école*, *nouvel an*, *vieil homme*, as well as such orthographical peculiarities as *nous plaçons*, *je mangeais*, *je me lève*, *je m'appelle*, etc.